



Congressman

SHERROD BROWN

Seniors Newsletter

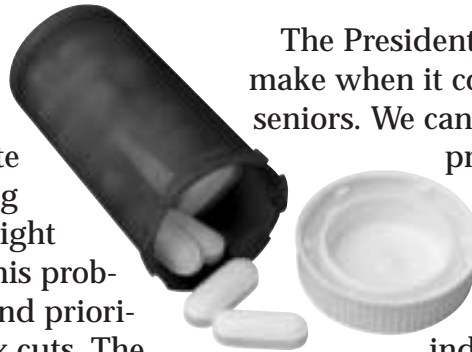
Summer 2002

There is a Right Way and a Wrong Way When It Comes to Prescription Drug Coverage

An estimated 12 million seniors lack prescription drug coverage. Millions more have coverage that offers inadequate protection against rapidly increasing prescription drug costs. There is a right way and a wrong way to address this problem. The right way relies on logic and prioritizes seniors ahead of additional tax cuts. The wrong way relies on empty promises and allocates insufficient budget resources to get the job done.

The logical solution is to add an optional prescription drug benefit to the Medicare benefits package. That means the cost sharing must be modest and seniors must have access to the medicine their doctor prescribes. To keep costs down, Medicare would function like other large insurers, harnessing the collective purchasing power of its 39 million beneficiaries to negotiate discounted drug prices.

The Bush Administration and Republicans in Congress are promoting a prescription drug proposal that bypasses Medicare in favor of bare bones private sector drug plans. Dispersing seniors into multiple private plans serves the best interests of the drug industry, not seniors. It would enable the drug industry to continue charging outrageously high prices, and chip away at the traditional Medicare program, setting the stage for Medicare privatization.



The President and Congress have a choice to make when it comes to drug coverage for seniors. We can confront the drug industry on prices, devote the necessary resources to provide adequate coverage, and add a real drug benefit to Medicare, or we can use this issue as a cheap, drug industry-friendly ploy to begin privatizing the Medicare program. There is only one right answer.

Seniors have earned — and they deserve — comprehensive health coverage, including a meaningful prescription drug benefit.



Congressman Brown discussing Medicare last year in Ohio. Pictured left to right, Shirley Toman of Lorain, Bill Best of Avon Lake, Sherrod Brown, and Lila and Francis Freedner of North Ridgeville.

How to Reach Key Agencies

Federal Agencies

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1-877-696-6775

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
1-800-MEDICAR(E)

Administration on Aging Eldercare Locator
1-800-677-1116

Medicare Fraud and Abuse Hotline
1-800-447-8477

Ohio Agencies

Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Hotline
1-800-686-1578

Ohio Department of Insurance
1-800-686-1526

Ohio Medicaid Consumer Hotline
1-800-324-8680

Brown Wants to Cut the Cost of Prescription Drugs

Consumers who rely on prescription drugs know that drug costs are skyrocketing.

Congressman Brown has joined with Senator John McCain of Arizona to push for the Greater Access to Affordable Pharmaceuticals (GAAP) Act. The GAAP Act would prevent drug companies from blocking consumer access to more affordable generic drugs. Brand-name drug companies use every trick in the book to prevent generic competitors from entering the market. This process cheats consumers out of billions of dollars in potential savings.

“Generics are identical to their name brand counterparts, but cost 40-80%, sometimes even 90% less than their brand-name equivalents. Bringing generics to market sooner will save consumers literally billions of dollars each year,” said Brown, who is the senior Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee.

100 Members of Congress Join Brown in Urging for Increase in Prostate Cancer Research

Prostate cancer is a growing threat to the health of American men. Prostate cancer accounts for approximately 30 percent of all cancer cases in the United States, and 11 percent of all male cancer deaths, making it the most commonly diagnosed cancer in American men. More than 30,000 American men lose their lives to prostate cancer every year.

Congressman Brown is sponsoring an effort to increase prostate cancer research funding. In a letter to the House Appropriations Committee, he and Congressman King (R-NY) call for the full funding amount of \$420 million in the Prostate Cancer Five-Year Investment Strategy and \$100 million for the Congressionally Directed Prostate Medical Research Program at the Department of Defense. The letter also urges Congress to fully fund the National Cancer Institute’s bypass budget and increase funding to the National Institutes of Health to \$27.3 billion. To date, 100 members of Congress have signed onto the effort. Medical research and public awareness campaigns represent our best weapons against prostate cancer.

Privatization of Social Security Risks American’s Retirement Security

Some members of Congress—and President Bush—support plans that would allow Wall Street to manage your Social Security money, putting Americans’ retirement at the mercy of an often-volatile stock market. Congressman Brown and others have pledged to maintain the program as a safety net designed to minimize catastrophic events possible in a stock-market system.

The recent collapse of Enron reminds us of the importance of Social Security as a safety net. Without Social Security, most Enron employees would have no retirement income at all.

Social Security protects against risks, including death or disability, low life-time earnings, and inflation. Changes to the Social Security program should be based on strengthening and preserving its fundamental role as an income safety net. Social Security is too important to turn it over to the volatility of the stock market.

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